

1
A ✓ 9th Sept.
No 22

SERMON

Preached to the

SOCIETIES

FOR

Reformation of Manners,

AT

St. Mary-le-Bow,

ON

Monday January the 3d, 1725.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,

JOHN, Lord Bishop of St. *ASAPH*.

Wynne

*L*ONDON!

Printed and Sold by JOSEPH DOWNING, in
Bartholomew-Close, near West-Smithfield,
M,DCC,XXVI,

SERMON

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St. Mark's



Monday January the 30. 1725.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,

JOHN TAYLOR Bishop of St. Asaph.

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MDCCLXXV.



MARK viii. 38.

Whoſoever therefore ſhall be aſhamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and ſinful Generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels.



HERE are two Paſſions deeply rooted in human Nature, that frequently cauſe Men, not otherwiſe ill diſpoſed, or diſinclined to Religion and Piety, to renounce the Profeſſion of the one, or fall from the Practice of the other, viz. Fear and Shame.

The former of theſe conſtrain'd St. Peter, in the Day of Trial, to deny his Maſter; and the reſt of the Apoſtles to forſake him: The latter, or perhaps a Mixture of both, made Nicodemus to reſort to our Saviour by Night, being aſhamed, or afraid, to eſpouſe him openly; and kept many of the chief Rulers, that believed on him, from an open Profeſſion of the Faith of Chriſt; becauſe, as the Evangelift tells us, *they loved the Praise of Men, more than the Praise of God.*

John iii. 2.

John xii. 42.

Ver. 43.

Theſe Paſſions, as they are near of kin: The one being an Uneaſineſs, ariſing from the Apprehenſion of Evil, or Suffering in general: The

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other, a like Uneasiness, caused by the Apprehension of Disgrace or Contempt; so they affect Men much in the same Manner, by raising their Aversion to such Objects, as appear destructive of their Being or well-Being; or injurious to their good Name and Reputation, and stirring them up by all the Means in their Power, to repel the one, and to decline the other.

When the Religion of Christ, and its Professors, are in a persecuted State, and Life, Liberty and Property, and all that is counted dear in this World, is made the Price of their Fidelity to Christ; the Fear of these Evils causes many to fall away; *to make Shipwreck of their Faith, and a good Conscience.* This was the Case of Christians in general, in the first Ages of Christianity, when all that took upon them this Profession, were sensible they did it at the utmost Hazard and Peril: And is so still in such Places, where the Denial of some necessary Truths, or the Profession of dangerous Errors contrary thereto, are forced upon Men, by the Dread of the severest Penalties.

But when the Profession of Religion is under no Discouragement, but, on the contrary, has the Protection and Countenance of Civil Government, and the Credit of the World to recommend it; yet even then, the Practice of Religion, and a strict Regard to its Precepts, may expose Men to Contempt, and bring them into Disrepute and Discredit. Even
2 Tim. iii. 12. then, *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus,* i. e. in perfect Conformity to his Laws, must expect to undergo some Degree of Persecution.

The

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The Maxims, Opinions, and Usages, that are establish'd and authoris'd in the World, are in many Respects so opposite to the Rules of the Gospel, that we cannot maintain our Credit with the one, without thwarting the Obligations laid on us by the other. It is not possible to please Men in all Cases, without offending God; nor to preserve the Friendship of the World, without incurring his Enmity.

It has been the Lot of Truth and Piety, to be always in some Measure ill treated and discountenanced in the World; but in an *adulterous and sinful Generation*, i. e. in a degenerate and corrupt Age, when Prophaneness and Irreligion, Vice and Immorality, are openly profess'd and practis'd; they are born down by the Multitude of their Adversaries, and can hardly stand their Ground. In such Circumstances, Vice, supported by the Number of its Adherents, dares not only to claim Excuse or Impunity, but even to arrogate to it self the Honour and Rewards of Vertue; whilst Vertue, being but weakly defended, and often betrayed or abandon'd by its Friends, is forced to hide its Head, and to bear the Reproach and Contempt due to Vice.

But however arbitrarily Men may distribute their Censures or Applauses, according to their various Fancies, Passions, or Interests; *the Judge of all the Earth will certainly do Right*. As his Law is the only true Touchstone of moral Rectitude, and the unchangeable Rule of Right and Wrong; so it is by this, that we are obliged to govern our selves, and to judge of the Merit or Demerit of our Actions; not by the variable
Opin-

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Opinions, and mistaken Judgments of Men. The Paths chalk'd out to us in the Gospel, are the Ways we ought to walk in, *thro' Honour and Dishonour, thro' good Report or evil Report*, whether the World approves, or condemns our Conduct.

Whenever, therefore, in doing our Duty, we happen to incur the Reproach or Contempt of the World, we may well slight and disregard it, when we reflect on that gracious Promise of our Saviour, *Whoever shall confess me before Men, Him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven.*

Matt. x. 32.

And on the contrary, whenever we find ourselves tempted, by the Fear of the Reproaches or Persecutions of Men, to the Commission of any Sin, or the Omission of any Christian Duty, that Temptation must needs lose its Force, and be disarm'd of all its Terror, if we do but call to Mind, and seriously consider that terrible Threat, denounced by our Saviour in the Words of my Text, *Whoever therefore shall be ashamed, &c.* In discoursing on these Words I shall,

- I. Enquire into the Nature, and shew the Folly and Unreasonableness of that Shame, that tempts Men to the Breach or Neglect of their Duty.
- II. I shall point out the ill Effects of this false Shame.
- III. I shall offer some Remedies for the Cure and Prevention of it.

I. I am to enquire, &c.

The

The Passion of Shame is grounded on the good Opinion, or Esteem, we naturally have for our selves, and the strong Desire implanted in us, of being well thought of, and esteem'd by others. As this gives us a tender and delicate Sense of Honour, so nothing is so insupportable to us, as Disgrace or Contempt. The wounding us in this Part, is like pricking a Nerve; as soon felt, and as acute a Pain.

When this Passion is directed to its proper Object, and excited in us by such Things as are immoral, base, or dishonest, it is a commendable Shame; a Principle of Vertue, an excellent Guard of Innocence, and Preservative against Sin. But when it is misapplied, by being directed to wrong Objects, agreeable to the false Notions of Honour that obtain in the World; when by it we are restrained from doing our Duty, and from acting suitably to the Sense of our Minds; it is a vicious Shame, and false Modesty, which ought as much to be shunn'd, as the former cherish'd and encourag'd.

This is the Effect of the too great Regard Men are apt to bear to the Judgments, Opinions and Practices that prevail in the World. These, by Reason of the Credit or Discredit, the Praise or Disgrace, that respectively attend our Compliance with, or Neglect of, what is generally esteem'd or approv'd, become a Law and Rule of Action, by which the greatest Part of Mankind are kept in Bondage and Subjection; and to which they pay a more sacred Regard, than they do to the Laws of God or Man. The Penalties that attend the Breach of the former, are seldom seriously laid to Heart: And tho' those

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those that attend the Breach of human Laws, being ready and at Hand, are generally more regarded; yet the Hopes of Impunity, by some Means or other, encourage many to transgress them. But those who offend against the Law of Fashion, by refusing to comply with the received Usages and Customs of the World, being sure to undergo the Censure and Dislike of those they converse with, there are few Men so resolute and insensible of these Evils, as to be Proof against them, and able to bear up under them.

For this Reason, in a loose and licentious Age, many who are inwardly well-disposed, and prompted by their Conscience to embrace the side of Piety and Vertue, do not dare openly to espouse their Interest; in the constant Discharge of all publick Duties, and a strict Abstinence from all sinful Practices. If they do not live in the total Neglect of their Duty, they are at least very remiss in the Discharge of it; and too commonly against the Dictates of their Reason, and Sense of their Hearts, are drawn into unwarrantable and sinful Compliances; because they are ashamed of doing, what may expose them to some Censure or Disgrace.

There is nothing wherein Men generally appear so shy and reserved, as in avowing their Conscience, in owning a strict Regard for their Duty, and a just Concern for the Salvation of their Souls. They reserve for God some Place in their Hearts, and adore him in secret, whilst in that Part of their Conduct, that is exposed to publick View, they conform to the World; by falling in with the licentious Manners, and
fashion-

fashionable Vices of the Age, and neglecting such Duties as are out of Request, and slighted in the World.

Thus, we see, the Generality of Christians, make no Scruple of letting themselves loose to all Manner of sensual Gratifications and Pleasures; of revenging the least Affront, according to the nice Punctilio's of false Honour; of sticking at nothing that may improve their Fortunes, or be a Means of advancing them in the World. In the mean Time, the Precepts of the Gospel, relating to Temperance, Patience, and forgiving of Injuries; to Humility, Justice and Charity, are little regarded, because these Matters are otherwise determin'd by Custom. And it seems to be a Maxim generally allow'd in the World, that what is usually practis'd by Men in their several Callings and Professions may lawfully be done.

And thus while 'tis accounted honourable to conform to general Practice, be it never so repugnant to the Rules of Piety: And, on the contrary, while the strict Practice of Vertue is imputed to Weakness of Mind, Singularity of Humour, Pride or Hypocrisy, it is no Wonder to see so many Men shamed, or frighted out of their Duty.

The hard Censures and Reproaches, wherewith profane and ungodly Men conspire to persecute those, who refuse *to run into the same Excess of Riot* with themselves, make great Impressions; because few Men have Firmness and Resolution enough to slight the Judgment or Contempt of Men.

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But that this Conduct is highly unreasonable, appears most evidently from hence, that no Man of common Sense will be guilty of the like, in the Management of his temporal Affairs. For is any Man so weak, as to suffer himself to be laugh'd out of his Estate; or any other valuable Possession or Interest? Or to quit an advantageous Bargain, for Fear of being ridicul'd? Or will any Man, in Time of Plague, when the Infection is become general, willingly thrust himself into it, to avoid the Imputation of Singularity? And is it not a greater Instance of Weakness and Folly, for a Man to suffer himself to be rallied, or reviled out of his Duty, out of his Salvation, and his most important Interests?

To be ashamed of doing unworthy or dishonest Actions, is a laudable Shame: But to be ashamed of doing what Reason and Religion both oblige us to, is an unmanly, vicious Modesty: 'Tis to be ashamed of our chief Glory, and greatest Ornament; to be ashamed of being evidently wise in our Conduct, of consulting our best Interest, and pursuing our true Happiness: 'Tis to be ashamed of rendering due Obedience to our Sovereign Lord, of expressing our Love to infinite Goodness, and our Gratitude to our best Friend and Benefactor; of shewing our Awe and Reverence of uncontrollable Power, and fearing above all Things to incur his Displeasure, by doing what he has forbid, or neglecting to do what he has commanded. And surely, these are no shameful Things, no *Works of Darkness*, but such as will bear the strongest Light, such as we ought rather

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rather to boast and glory in, and to perform with the utmost Assurance and Confidence.

It is doubtless, a very preposterous Way to shun Disgrace, by doing that which alone deserves it. For, in Truth, Sin is our only real Deformity; the only base and dishonourable Thing that cleaves to us. This first caused Shame, and brought it into the World; and will ever carry it along with it, as its inseparable Attendant. Who they are that deserve it, and whose Portion it shall be, the inspired Writers frequently tell us: *Shame shall be the Promotion of Fools.* And, *the Wicked shall come to Shame,* Prov. iii. 35.
says the wise Man. And the Holy — xiii. 15.
Psalmist, *Let none that wait on Thee be ashamed:* But, *Let them be ashamed, which transgress without Cause.* Psal. xxv. 3.

It well becomes such to be ashamed of their Weakness, who chuse to be justly reproachable for bad Actions, rather than be unjustly reproached for Good; of their Ingratitude to their Maker, who will rather Affront him, than disoblige their Fellow-Creatures; and of their extream Folly, in thinking it more eligible to bear the Reproaches of their own Consciences, and to incur the divine Displeasure, than to undergo the Censures or Scoffs of vain and worthless Men.

Having thus shewn the Folly and Unreasonableness, I proceed,

II dly, To point out the ill Effects, and mischievous Consequences of this false Shame.

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Now these may be consider'd, either with Respect to the Persons themselves, who are influenced by it, or with Regard to other Men.

With Respect to the Persons themselves, that are influenced by it, the most natural Effect of this false Shame is, to deter them from their Duty; and to hinder them from doing, what they are perswaded they ought to do. Those who are sway'd by this Principle, can neither speak, nor act as they think. They will dissemble their real Sentiments, and by their Silence seem to approve those Disorders, which the inward Sense of their Minds condemns; because they have not the Courage to speak disagreeable Truths, or to declare openly for a Cause, which has the Misfortune to be slighted, and discountenanced in the World.

If the Libertine and Profane make a Jest of God and Religion; if the common Swearer takes his Name in vain, on every trifling Occasion; if *Fools make a Mock at Sin*, and the Dissolute and Licentious ridicule Vertue, and endeavour to laugh Piety out of Countenance; if the Dealers in Calumny and Slander, entertain their Company at the Expence of their Neighbours good Name and Reputation; those who are overawed by this false Shame, and

Jer. i. 8. *are afraid of Mens Faces*, as the

Prophet describes Men of this Character, will not dare to express their Resentment of such flagrant Crimes; nor to bear their Testimony against such open Violations of the Laws to God. So that to this Principle must be ascribed, the too general Neglect of the most indispensable Duties of Piety and Charity.

Nor

Nor does it only hinder Men from doing Good, but it forcibly inclines them to Evil. Those who count it a Disgrace to live in exact Conformity to the Rules of Piety and Vertue, may be easily led a Step farther, to think it honourable to imitate the Examples of Men of Rank and Figure, even in the most licentious and disorderly Courses. When Men are ashamed of what they ought to glory in, they are in the ready Way to arrive at that Pitch of Corruption, as *to glory in their Shame.*

But 2^{dly}, The Effects of this false Shame are not less mischievous with Regard to other Men. As it proceeds from the too great Defe-
rence and Submission we are apt to pay to the prevailing Opinions and Customs of the World, which are every where favourable to Vice and Corruption; so it must needs encourage those to go on in evil Courses, who are already but too much inclined to it. Vicious Men are authoriz'd by being imitated, and kept in Countenance by the Number of their Followers. Those who are already depraved to that Degree, as to entertain a mean Opinion of Religion, and to despise Piety and Vertue, will look upon them with still greater Contempt, when they see those who profess a Veneration for them, dare not stand up in their Defence, for Fear of their Displeasure. And thus Religion loses more Ground by the unaccountable Weakness, or Cowardice of its Adherents, than by all the other Batteries, its Adversaries can raise against it; as the Pusillanimity or Desertion of profess'd Friends, does more Disservice to any Cause, than the open Attacks of avow'd Enemies.

And

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And as this Conduct gives Countenance and Encouragement to ill Men, so it occasions no less Scandal to the Good. These must needs be dishearten'd, when they see those, who are reputed Friends to the same Cause, desert their Station, and flinch from their Duty, upon such slight Grounds, as the Apprehension of a little Disgrace from the World. But those especially, who are yet weak in Faith, and not sufficiently confirm'd in a virtuous Course, will be tempted by such Examples, to do many Things inconsistent with Piety; and to think themselves excusable at least, if not innocent, when they can vouch the Authority of Persons, who in other Respects seem to have a just Concern for the Interests of Religion.

To this Principle, therefore, we may chiefly impute the Sins and Failings of otherwise good Men: And if it is able to corrupt those, who have a Sense of Piety, and the Impressions of Religion on their Hearts, it must needs be of the most dangerous Consequence.

Now as the ill Effects of this false Shame are very fatal and pernicious to Piety, so we cannot labour too much, to find out proper Remedies against them, which brings me to the

III^d Thing propos'd, *viz.* To offer some Remedies for the Cure or Prevention of this false Shame.

The first I shall offer is, to perswade our selves, that there is nothing more excellent, or more honourable, and consequently more worthy of our highest Regard and Esteem, than Piety and Vertue. When this Perswasion has
once

once got Possession of our Minds, and taken root there; we shall be in no great Danger of being shamed or scared out of our Duty, by the false Judgments the World entertains of Piety.

Now that Piety, taken in its full Extent, as it comprehends Vertue or Goodness, is the noblest Accomplishment, and highest Perfection of human Nature; that it has that Beauty and Majesty imprinted on it, that commands Respect, and attracts universal Love and Veneration, is most evident from the concurrent Suffrages of Enemies as well as Friends.

Many, if not most of those, who cannot find in their Hearts to embrace it themselves, because they cannot shake off inveterate evil Habits, and renounce their beloved Lusts, would wish that all others, especially those for whose Welfare they are most concern'd, did so; and were truly good. The Hypocrite pays his Homage to it, by borrowing its Colours, that he make a fair Shew at least, and appear to Men to be what he really is not. And even those who are most addicted to Vice, are pleas'd to have those Vertues ascribed to them by their Flatterers, to which they are utter Strangers: and as much offended to be characteris'd by those Vices, which are their daily Delight and constant Practice: Which is an undeniable Evidence of their inward Esteem and Veneration for the one, as well as of their Disesteem and Contempt of the other.

The Testimony of Friends, I need not insist upon, especially in this Assembly, which I may reasonably presume to consist of none but such as are already throughly convinced of the
Truth

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Truth of whatever can be said, to the Honour and Advantage of Piety and Vertue. A more unquestionable Proof of this cannot be given, than by being, as I take for granted all here present are, either actually Members, or Favourers and Encouragers of those Religious Societies, who are not only Friends in Heart, or secret well-Wishers to, but have openly espoused the Cause of God and Goodness, by publicly taking its Part, and frankly owning and avowing it both in Word and Deed.

To this End, you have lifted your selves into this Service; and join'd both Hearts and Hands, that by mutual Aid and Assistance, and by well concerted Measures, ye might vigorously prosecute so noble a Design. The Methods whereby ye carry it on, are no other than what Christian Prudence and Charity suggest; by an edifying and exemplary Conversation, and by providing as far as ye are able for the Instruction of the Ignorant; by giving good Advice, or friendly Reproof, on proper Occasions; and where these gentler Methods are judged insufficient, by calling in the Aid of the Civil Magistrate.

The visible Succour and Countenance you have already given this Cause, in suppressing Profaneness, Vice and Immorality, in banishing Scandals out of this great City, and in bringing the Practice of Piety and Vertue into Vogue and Request, have provoked very many, and kindled the like pious Zeal all over this Nation, and even in many Foreign Countries, where the Reform'd Religion is profess'd; so that it may reasonably be hoped, that so just an Enterprize will be attended with suitable Success.

As

As it is the Honour of God, and the Interest of his holy Religion, that ye have undertaken to defend, so ye may assuredly hope and trust that he will bless and prosper your Endeavours: And that this *Work, which is of God,* Acts v. 39. *cannot be overthrown,* by all the Opposition which the Devil, or his wicked Instruments, can raise against it. And as it is the Good of Mankind, their temporal and eternal Welfare, both which are either the natural Effects, or the necessary Consequences of Piety and Vertue, that ye zealously labour to promote; so it may justly be expected, that all who have these at Heart, will not only wish and pray for your Success, but heartily join in, and bear a Part in so useful and excellent a Work.

It might doubtless be carried on with greater Effect, if there was a more general Concurrence, especially of Men of Rank and Authority, to countenance and abet it. They who have it in their Power to make Vice honoured and respected, might certainly with more Ease, by their Example and Influence, raise the Reputation of Vertue; and restore it to that Credit, that is naturally due to it. Those who will not employ those Advantages, which by the Bounty of Providence they are possess'd of, to promote the Honour of God, and the Good of Mankind, will certainly have much to answer for: The Guilt of other Mens Disorders, as well as their own, will lie in great Measure at their Doors. But those who labour in this good Work, whatever their Success may be, shall not wholly lose the Fruit of their Labour: They will have the Comfort and

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Satisfaction of it here, and their Reward hereafter.

But, *2dly*, Another Remedy against this false Shame is, to turn this Passion on its proper Object, by perswading our selves, that there is nothing more worthy of Shame, nothing so ugly and deformed, as Vice and Wickedness. It was to restrain and deter us from these, that this Passion was implanted in us: And it has constantly this Effect, as long as Men are govern'd by the genuine Dictates and Principles of Nature; and till these are corrupted and depraved by evil Customs and vicious Examples. Even those, who are far gone in Vice, endeavour to conceal it as much as they can from the Eyes of the World, out of a natural Consciousness of the Shame and Dishonour that attend it. *They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are Evil.*

John iii. 19.

If therefore proper Measures were every where taken, to bring these hidden Works of Darkness into Light; and to expose them to the World in their proper Colours, there would not be so much Wickedness in it, at least it would not appear so bold and bare-faced, as now it does. Where Men are left to themselves, and suffer'd to live as they list, there Vice and Licentiousness must of Course prevail. If those who lead the most unchristian Lives, the openly profane and irreligious, the lewd and intemperate, those who cannot open their Mouths without Blasphemies, Oaths, or Curses; if these, I say, are permitted to mingle with other Christians, and to enjoy the same Privi-

Privileges, without Censure or Controul, it is impossible but that Corruption must abound.

But if these, and the like Offenders, were frequently made the Objects of publick Justice, and punished with a Severity suitable to their Deserts, nothing would tend more to keep up in Mens Minds a Sense of the odious and shameful Nature of their Crimes, and to raise their Abhorrence of them. The Punishments inflicted on Criminals, do not only cause a present Smart, but leave a Scar, or Mark of Infamy behind them. These will both shame and terrify Sinners, and in some Measure keep them to their Duty. If the Offenders themselves are not better'd by them, others at least, who may have evil Inclinations, will be restrained by the Example, and kept in Awe, by the Fear or Shame of their Punishment. Good Men will also be edified thereby, as the Severity used against notorious Sinners confirms them in their Duty, and makes some Reparation for the Scandal given by the Crimes of other Men.

And as this shews us how much the Publick is obliged to those worthy Magistrates, who use their Authority to punish Wickedness and Vice of all Sorts; so it equally proves the Usefulness and Necessity of these Religious Societies, who make it their principal Business to be aiding and assisting to the Magistrate, in detecting, informing against, and prosecuting Offenders; without which, neither the Authority of Laws, nor the Vigilance of Magistrates, would be able to do much, either in punishing them, or deterring others by their Example. By their

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Zeal and Diligence in performing these necessary Offices, a great and sensible Check has been already given to that Deluge of Iniquity, that threaten'd to overspread this Nation: Many lewd and infamous Houses, the Haunts of the dissolute and debauch'd of all Sorts, have been suppress'd: Many Thousands of notorious Offenders have undergone the Shame and Infamy due to their Crimes; and thereby, 'tis to be hoped, many more have been preserved from Ruine both of Body and Soul, by the Suppression of those Seminaries of Vice and Wickedness.

But, 3^{dly}, Another Remedy against this false Shame, may be taken from the Consideration, that it has ever been the Lot of Men eminently Good, to be despised, disgraced, or hated in the World. This Stratagem has been always employ'd by the great Enemy of Mankind, to deter Men from their Duty. Those in all Ages, who have been the *shining Lights* of the World, and who have most distinguish'd themselves by their Zeal, in Promoting the Interests of Truth and Piety, and in opposing Vice and Corruption, have had the largest Share in this Treatment. Such were the Prophets of Old, our Lord himself, and his Apostles. Those Men, *of whom the World was not worthy*, have been treated as the most unworthy of all Men; and pursued with implacable Hatred and Malice. What vile and scandalous Imputations, and what reproachful Names and Characters, did not the spiteful World bespatter them with?

But were they deterr'd by this Usage, from pursuing their generous and charitable Designs? No: it was rather Matter of Glory and Triumph

umph to them. The Sufferings they underwent, served only to animate their Zeal, and strengthen their Resolution. They embraced Reproach for Righteousness Sake, not only with Content, but even with Joy, feeling it most true, what their Master had assured them of in these Words, *Blessed shall ye be, when*

Men shall revile and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil against you falsely for my Sake: Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven.

Matth. v.
11, 12.

And as ye are engaged in the same good Cause, ye must expect to have a Share in the same ill Treatment. They who go about to reform the Manners of a corrupt Age, must be prepared to encounter many Difficulties, and to struggle with many Adversaries. Innocence alone, or a bare Abstinence from Sin, as it discovers and reproves the Disorders of others, will for that Reason only, draw upon Men the Hatred and Dislike of those they dissent from.

But if moreover they employ their charitable Endeavours in reclaiming Men from Vice, and in disturbing their quiet Possession and Enjoyment of their sinful Pleasures; this is beyond Measure provoking to those who *bate to be re-form'd*, and are resolved to persist in their ungodly Courses. They will, upon this Account, leave no Methods untried to blast the Designs, and to defeat the Endeavours of those, who have no other Aim, but to bring them to Repentance and Amendment; by Calumny and Detraction, by Scoffs and Reproaches, and by all the odious Names and Characters, that the most spiteful Rage and ingenious Malice can invent.

But

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But this ought not, however, to discourage those, who are engaged in so good a Cause. For *so, as our Saviour tells us, persecuted they the Prophets which were before us.* Matt. vi. 12.

As our Happiness or Misery depends not on the Esteem or Contempt of Men, so all that we can either hope from their Favour, or fear from their Displeasure, is of small Account. It is from God alone, that we must expect the Reward of our patient Continuance in well-doing. If we labour to approve our selves to him, by a careful and conscientious Discharge of our Duty, whatever may befall us in this World, our main Interest and Concernment is secure. For as our *Work is Righteousness*, so our End shall be *Peace, Quietness, and Assurance for ever.*

But lastly, The most effectual Remedy against this false Shame, is the Consideration of what Judgment God will pass upon those, who are prevailed upon by it, to transgress or neglect their Duty to him. For as the Fear of God, is the best Antidote against the Fear of Men; so is the Apprehension of his Disgrace, the surest Preservative against the ill Effects of worldly Shame.

If then we are ashamed of God, and our Duty to him, may he not justly in Recompence be ashamed of us, and disdain to own us in Favour and Mercy? He will most certainly do it, for he hath frequently so declared; and a Time will speedily come, when Shame, Confusion and Misery, shall fall to the Lot of the Despisers of God and Religion; whilst Glory, Honour and Peace shall be upon them, who per-

persevere in well-doing, in Spite of all the Discouragements and Persecutions of the World.

Shall we then be so far swayed by human Regards, as to have no Thought or Apprehension of the fatal Consequences of so unreasonable a Conduct? Shall we fear to lose the Favour of Men, whose Favour avails nothing to our main Interests; and shall we not fear to be deprived of his Favour, upon whom our All depends, and without which we are incapable of any Happiness, of any solid Joy or Comfort? Shall we fear the Displeasure of Man, *whose Breath is in his Nostrils*, ready to fly away every Moment; and not dread to offend the Living God, at whose absolute Disposal we are, to render us happy or miserable to all Eternity? Or, lastly, shall we do that for the avoiding a little present Disgrace, which we shall for ever be ashamed of, which we shall never remember without extreme Regret, nor reflect upon without the utmost Shame and Confusion?

This surely, no reasonable, or considerate Men would do, upon any Terms, or upon any Pretence whatever. No evil Examples should intice us, no evil Customs engage us; neither Fear, nor Shame, nor Complaisance, nor any Regard to the Pleasure or Displeasure of Men, should prevail upon us, to comply with any sinful Practice, to omit any Duty, or neglect any Season of performing such good Works, whereby we may glo-

glorify God, edify our Neighbour, or promote the Salvation of our own Souls.

And blessed is that Servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. He shall not be ashamed in the Evil Time. But his Good Works shall follow him; and he shall receive the full Reward of his Labour. For, for him, and for all those, who have finish'd their Course in the Faith and Fear of God, there is laid up a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give to them at his appearing.

F I N I S.



